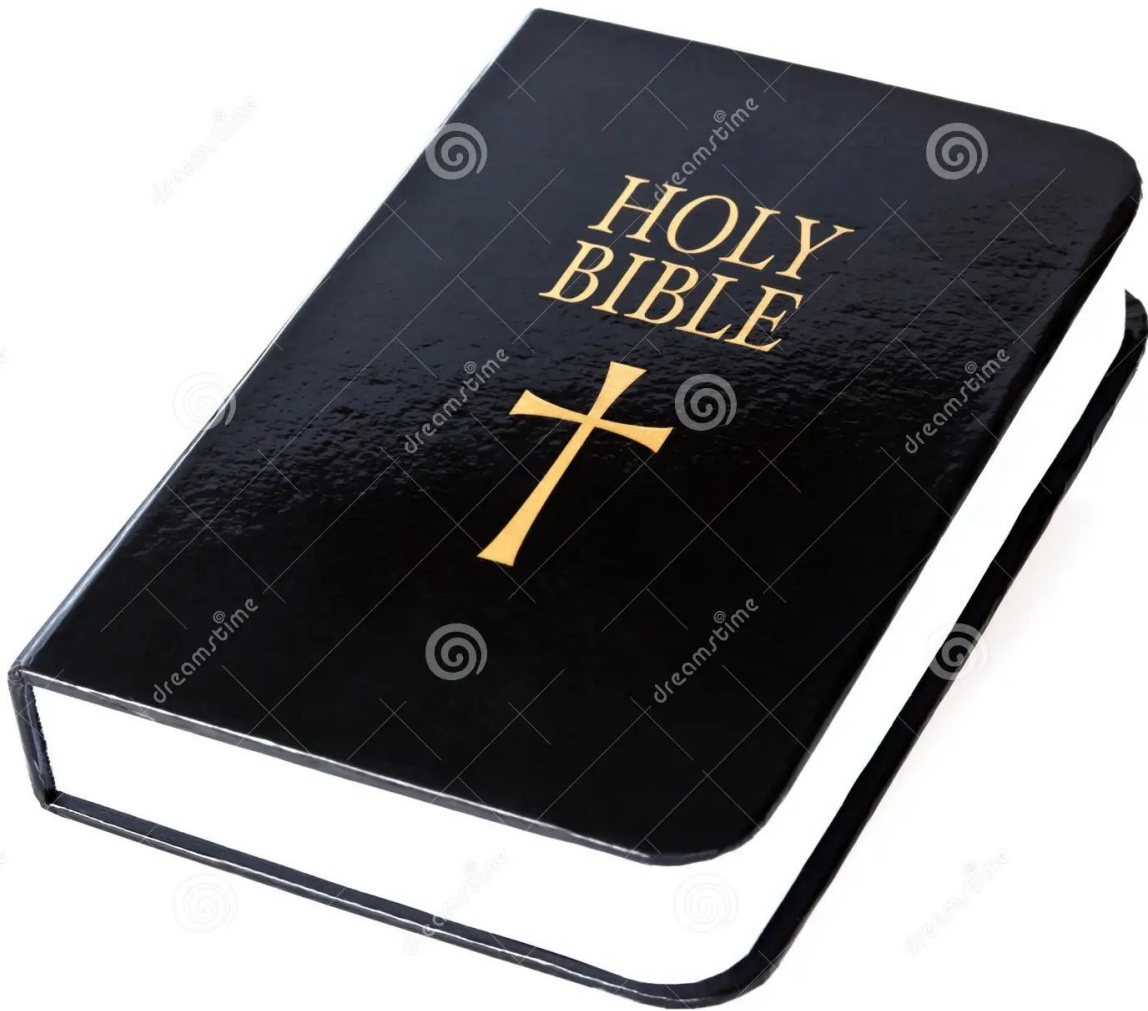


IS THE BIBLE RELEVANT



IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

Jim Kaness

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This living document, revised as information and inspiration become available, is my own work on my own initiative. The references and factual data have been checked and are believed to be correct but errors can occur. Please provide any comments, suggestions, and corrections to the author:

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INTRODUCTION

It's been rumored about that the Bible is old fashioned, out-dated and not relevant in the 21st century.

Maybe so. After all it takes two whole chapters from the Bible's beginning before we find the first instance of mis-information, subterfuge and just plain lying by the devil to Eve. [Genesis 3:1-24]

And it takes a whole chapter more before we find the account of the first deliberate murder when Cain got jealous of his brother Abel and killed him. [Genesis 4:1-16]

Are you trying to tell me that lying, deception and murder are no longer relevant in the 21st century?

In chapter 16 of Genesis we read about Abram having intercourse with his wife's servant Hagar and getting her pregnant.

In chapter 19 of Genesis we read the account of Lot's daughters getting Lot drunk and having incestuous intercourse with him so they can get pregnant and preserve their family line.

So here in just the first 19 of the 50 chapters in the book of Genesis we read of lying, murder, adultery, and incest. The whole Bible contains 66 books with 1,189 chapters altogether. How many more relevant behaviors do you think we might find in the other 65 books?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word 'relevant' as “having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand”. So if the Bible is 'relevant' it has useful information and advice about living our lives in the present time and place.

No, the Bible is not just relevant about the bad side of human behavior. It says much about how to prosper financially, how to get along smoothly with family and friends, and how to have real joy and peace of mind in this life. Many claim the Bible is an Owner's Manual given to us by the one who knows us best: our creator God who designed how our minds work, what our DNA determines, and how we react to various situations in life.

In the following pages we will explore what the Bible has to say about some very relevant behaviors found in today's news and our own lives in this 21st century of the Common Era (CE).

GUN CONTROL

The Bible has much to say about the current Gun Control discussion.

In Genesis chapter 4 we are introduced to Adam and Eve's first two kids: Cain and Abel.

- They were raised in a loving home, with both natural parents (married by God himself). [Genesis 1:27 and 2:21-25]
- They were both employed: Cain was a farmer and Abel a rancher. [Genesis 4:1]
- They were not minorities. They were the majority!

In spite of all this, Cain became jealous of and angry toward his brother Abel and the day finally came that Cain killed Abel. [Genesis 4:8]

So, you ask, what has all this to do with gun control?

CAIN AND ABEL LIVED IN A GUARANTEED 100% GUN CONTROLLED SOCIETY!

THERE WERE NO GUNS!

GUNS HAD NOT BEEN INVENTED YET.

We don't know how Cain killed Abel, only that it was done. Fists? Clubs? Rocks? All we do know is that no metal was used. It was six generations after Cain before any kind of metal-working is mentioned: "Zillah gave birth to Tubal-Cain, who worked at the forge making bronze and iron tools." [Genesis 4:22]

Throughout the Bible we read of war, slaughter, murder and massacre, and not one single gun was used!

"Guns don't kill people. People kill people."

SEX

Ask any pastor. This is the one sermon, they all know if they preach it, they will lose half their congregation! But I do not have a congregation. I am not a pastor. What follows are not my words, but the Bible's words.

God made Adam and Eve [Genesis 1:27 - 2:25], and God made sex so there could be Cain and Abel [Genesis 4:1-2] and all their other kids and grandkids. God, and His son Jesus, laid down some rules about sex: not to take all the fun out of life but to keep us from being deeply hurt, injured, traumatized, and devastated.

Biblical sex is really quite simple.

1. Stay celibate (do not have sex with anyone) unless and until you marry a person of the opposite sex. [1 Corinthians 7:1-9]
2. If you do marry a person of the opposite sex, then stay married and enjoy sexual intercourse with that person (and only that person) until one of you dies.[Ephesians 5:22-33]
3. If your spouse turns out to be a really bad choice, the spouse from hell, then you may separate (legal separation) BUT while separated you must remain celibate until the other spouse dies.[1 Corinthians 7:10-11]
4. Only after your spouse dies are you free to remarry and enjoy sex with a new spouse.[Matthew 22:23-31, Mark 12:18-25, Luke 20:27-36]
5. Divorce and remarriage, as practiced widely today, are not allowed in the Bible.[Matthew 5:32, Matthew 19:8-9, Luke 16:18]

And, if your sexual education could use notching up a grade level or two, then read the Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs in some versions). It is located just after Ecclesiastes and just before Isaiah in the Bible. King Solomon had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines, so he should know a thing or two about sex with women! [1 Kings 11:1-6]

If you and I would care enough to follow God's rules on this then most of our Family Law Attorneys would be out of work! But, of course, it is an age old practice to ignore what the Bible says and brag, as Frank Sinatra sang, "I did it my way."

If everyone followed God's rules on sex there would be NO abortion clinics, NO sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and NO family law courts. But, you say, removing all the STD's, alimony, child support, and bitter ex-lovers would take all the fun out of my life!!!

I am no one's judge. What you do is not my business, but it is God's business. And He is our judge! [Matthew 7:1-5, Luke 6:37-42]

You want to change your ways? Ask God's forgiveness. The Bible clearly says God will forgive us if we confess and repent of our sins. The requirement for confession and repentance as a pre-condition to forgiveness is repeated throughout the Bible. [Leviticus 5:5-10, 1 Kings 8:46-51, 1 John 1:8-10]

OFTEN MISQUOTED BIBLE VERSES

Discussed below are some verses from the Bible that frequently make their way into movies and talk shows in a form that suggests the speaker last looked at a Bible when it was used to swear in a crooked politician.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

We often hear "The wife is supposed to submit to her husband" thrown out as an excuse by those men who believe that "she's my woman and I can do what I want with her". If those men could only read and learn to tell the truth they would know what the Bible really says.

Yes, in Ephesians 5:22 it does say, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord", but the men who love to quote that verse are usually silent about Ephesians 5:25 where it says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...". In Ephesians 5:33 it is all summed up as "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Colossians 3:18-19 and 1 Peter 3:1-5 echo what is said in Ephesians 5:22-33. Leadership, not dictatorship, is indicated here.

THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

Jesus said in his 'Sermon on the Mount' given in Matthew 5:5 that "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." which echoes the words in Psalm 37:11. The popular definition of the word 'meek' is weak or timid. That is incorrect.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word 'meek' as 'enduring injury with patience and without resentment'. The synonyms include 'humble' and 'modest'. The antonyms include 'arrogant' and 'conceited'.

A meek person is not afraid or incapable of retaliating, but has their pride under control and chooses to meet life's problems with patience and humility and humor. A meek person meets life's problems peaceably without violence or revenge.

Jesus sets the example for us regarding being meek. On many occasions he talked his way out of tricks and accusations. Matthew 12:22-37 is only one example of this. One of the strongest actions recorded about Jesus is when he kicked over the tables of the money changers and dove merchants in the Temple. [Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:13-16]. The issue was not exchanging money or selling doves to the devout pilgrims who traveled long distances to worship there, but the merchants in the Temple knew they had a monopoly and were cheating the devout with high fees and prices, making the Temple a "den of thieves".

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

In Exodus 20:12 we find the commandment, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." The word "honor" is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "To revere, to respect, to treat with deference and submission". Honoring someone is very different from obeying that someone. Obedience may be commanded by someone in authority over us. Like love and respect, honor can not be commanded; it can only be freely given by the giver. We do not honor our parents by obeying them against our will, afraid of some threat or retaliation ("Do what your father says, or you'll be sorry!").

We honor our parents by accepting and believing that they have our best interest at heart and choosing to pay close attention to what they tell us, placing high value on their experience, advice, and love. And, yes, there are some parents who may not be worthy of our honor. Parents are not perfect, but they are more likely than anyone else to want what is best for us. That is why this commandment includes the promise or reward of living a long life and retaining our inheritance.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

I was raised in Christian circles where a Christian was often defined as one who did NOT drink, smoke, dance and attend motion picture shows. Those same Christians could be found cheating on their wives and husbands, and cheating on their customers and business associates, but that was harder to detect and easily went unnoticed by their fellow church members who were too busy making sure they themselves did not get caught when they drank, smoked, danced, and sat up in the balcony at a motion picture show.

There are many good Bible verses that define how a Christian should conduct himself or herself. The "Gold Standard" for this is found in Matthew 22:34-40 which simply says we should love God with all we can muster (choosing and obeying God as our personal lord and master), and we should love others as much as we love ourselves (giving to others the same level of concern and consideration, fairness and honesty, as we give to ourselves).

A less familiar passage, but one with some pretty clear and simple advice (probably why it is less familiar), is found in Matthew 15:10-20. In verse 11 Jesus says, "What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean', but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean'."

Jesus' disciples were folks just like you and me and did not have a clue about what this meant. Jesus patiently went on to explain in verses 16 through 20, "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'" This is also found in Mark 7:14-23.

For those who would prefer an Old Testament reference for this, I suggest Proverbs chapter 3 and Ezekiel chapter 18 which say pretty much the same thing.

For the record, Jesus is my Lord and Savior. That makes me a "Christian" by the original definition. I am a sinner saved by grace. I am no better than anyone else out there---just tired of being lied to and cheated by some who claim to be Christian.

FORGIVENESS

Today one often hears that "God loves everyone, and therefore God will surely forgive everyone for our disobedience of God's laws". Such a deal! I can murder and rape and help myself to your wife and car and house and God will forgive me! No wonder this lie is so popular!

Sorry to disappoint you, but that is not how the Bible explains it. Yes, God has great love for each one of us - so much love that He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross and pay the penalty we owe for ignoring and disobeying God. [John 3:16-21] In other words, God loves each of us as individual people, but that does not mean He loves the things each of us might do such as the evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander listed above. Those of us who are parents are familiar with loving our children while being very unhappy when our children steal money from us or drive the family car without permission. That's how God feels about us.

In Psalm 89:20-37 God says this about King David: "If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes...I will punish their sin with the rod...but I will not take my love from him...". God will never stop loving you just because your children do something to displease God.

The Bible clearly says God will forgive us if we confess and repent of our sins. If you or I or God forgive someone without that someone first confessing and repenting of their disobedience, then we are just ignoring what they did and accepting it as OK. The requirement for confession and repentance as a pre-condition to forgiveness is repeated throughout the Bible. [Leviticus 5:5-10, 1 Kings 8:46-51, 1 John 1:8-10]

MONEY

Another popular misquote from the Bible is to say that "Money is the root of all evil", but that lie is not what the Bible says. In 1 Timothy 6:10 we read, "For the love of money is a root of all evil." It is the love of money, not money itself, that is often a problem. A person who loves money will lie, cheat, and steal to get more of it, without regard to who gets hurt in the process. They will put their faith in their money and make money their God instead of putting their faith in the God of Heaven who cares for them. In Hebrews 13:5 we read, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' "

JONAH AND THE WHALE

The debate is still on whether Jonah could have survived three days in the belly of a whale. But that is not what the Bible says. In Jonah 1:17 we read that the Lord **provided a large fish** to swallow Jonah for three days and three nights. Other translations available to me call it a "great fish", "big fish" or "huge fish" and so on. The type of fish is not given. Was it a whale, a type of shark, or something uniquely created for the occasion? We just do not know. What the Bible does say is that God provided a fish that could do the job of hiding and protecting Jonah for three days and three nights.

LOVE IS A VERB

Those of us who speak English regularly know that the word "love" has many different meanings. We "love" hot dogs or we "love" baseball and so on, meaning we enjoy those things.

Then there are the deeper emotions, especially those involving the opposite sex. We say I "love" him or her meaning we find pleasure in their company, or get weak in the knees when we see that person.

But when Jesus used the word "love" he was not talking about our emotions. He was talking about our physical actions.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. [Matthew 5:44]

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. [Luke 6:35]

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. [John 15:13]

In the above examples we are commanded to "pray", to "do good and lend", and to "lay down our life (die for)" another person. To love someone this way means to write a check for them, to spend our time and talent helping them, or even offering our own life that theirs might be spared. One of the hardest things to do might be to put up with (cope with) their attitude, personality or other traits while we are trying to help them physically.

Jesus did not say this would be easy! He said we should do it anyway.

JESUS AND POLITICS

Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's." [Matthew 22:21 and Mark 12:17] In Jesus' day, Caesar was the head of the Roman Empire which occupied and ruled Israel. Indeed, many wanted Jesus to be a political leader who would unite Israel against the Romans and throw the Romans out of Israel. [Matthew 26:55, Mark 11:10, Mark 14:48]

But political action was not the mission of Jesus. Jesus said he came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. [Matthew 5:17] Jesus came to bring change into the lives of individual people, regardless of their government or their station in life. It is our individual relationship with God that matters- not our political philosophy or social standing (rich or poor, slave or free, gender or ethnicity).

Jesus was familiar with the writings that it is God who appoints kings and rulers over us, whether elected presidents or bullying dictators [Daniel 2:17 and Daniel 4:17]. This thought is repeated in Romans 13:1-2.

Was Jesus 'liberal' or 'conservative' as we use those words today? Jesus certainly taught us to help the poor and needy and to be generous in our giving. Jesus told the rich young man, "...sell your possessions and give to the poor..." [Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 18:22] That makes him sound rather 'liberal'. On the other hand, Jesus appeared quite 'conservative' when he told that same rich young man, "...obey the commandments..."; [Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19] Jesus did not say those commandments were old-fashioned and not relevant in today's world. On the contrary, Jesus said to OBEY THEM. I suggest that Jesus was neither 'liberal' nor 'conservative' but that he was the best of BOTH in full measure!

Jesus taught us to be responsible by paying our debts and taxes [Matthew 17:24] and fair and honest, while being kind and merciful and generous to those we meet who need our help [Matthew 6:2, Matthew 23:23]. But the Bible does point out the difference between those who truly need help and those who are just lazy and seek to play on our emotions to gain undeserved sympathy and help [Matthew 12:36 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6 - 15].

CHRISTMAS

Christmas trees, [Santa Claus](#), presents, stockings by the fireplace, snow, [Scrooge](#), [The Nutcracker](#) and Christmas Carols are all part of Christmas in 21st century America. But, where did they come from and what do they all mean?

To begin with, our American Christmas is really two intermingled parallel celebrations: The birth of Jesus Christ and the [Winter Solstice](#).

Some 2,000 years ago the ancient Romans celebrated [Saturnalia](#) on 17 December in honor of their god Saturn. The partying expanded to a week-long revelry of gift-giving, role-reversals (masters waiting on their slaves) and other merriment. Who could argue with celebrating the winter solstice when the shorter, colder days end and usher in longer, warmer days.

Until the reign of Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, Romans worshiped their emperor as a god and Christianity was illegal. Some have suggested that the early Christians found it safer to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ while all the Roman Empire was celebrating Saturnalia and thus be "under the radar" and safe from persecution.

The Bible does not say just when Jesus was born. By the fourth century when Christianity became legal, the Roman Christian church formally settled on 25 December to celebrate "Christ's Mass" or [Christmas](#), and so it is today.

Our family will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Whatever your family celebrates, do enjoy the holiday.

EASTER

Easter eggs, bunny rabbits and candy as well as special church services with special music and larger attendance are all part of Easter in 21st century America. But, where did they come from and what do they all mean?

To begin with, our American Easter is really two intermingled parallel celebrations: (1) The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and (2) the end of winter and the beginning of springtime.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sometime about the year 30AD, is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Throughout history various prophets have proclaimed their messages and eventually died. On Friday before the start of the Jewish Sabbath Jesus gave up His spirit before His body could die from its wounds. For about three hours the Sun went dark and the curtain of the Temple was torn in two parts. (Only the high priest was permitted to pass beyond this curtain once each year [Exodus 30:10; Hebrews 9:7] to enter God's presence for all of Israel and make atonement for their sins [Leviticus 16]. The death of Jesus made this curtain and its purpose 'overtaken by events'. When His followers came to the borrowed tomb on the following Sunday they found it empty! [Luke 23:26-24:8] In the days following, Jesus appeared to over 500 people and later His followers watched as He bodily rose from this Earth and went back to Heaven. These events are well documented by His followers and others. [1 Corinthians 15:1-11]

One part of the 'Easter confusion' is the date we celebrate Easter. The Bible is silent about the date that Christ was crucified, buried and rose again to life. From the [Wikipedia article on Easter](#) we learn that "Easter and its related holidays are movable feasts, not falling on a fixed date; its date is computed based on a lunisolar calendar (solar year plus Moon phase) similar to the Hebrew calendar. The First Council of Nicaea (325) established only two rules, namely independence from the Hebrew calendar and worldwide uniformity. No details for the computation were specified; these were worked out in practice, a process that took centuries and generated a number of controversies. It has come to be the first Sunday after the ecclesiastical full moon that occurs on or soonest after 21 March. Even if calculated on the basis of the more accurate Gregorian calendar, the date of that full moon sometimes differs from that of the astronomical first full moon after the March equinox."

After months of cold weather and snow it is understandable that we should welcome the coming of springtime with its warm sunny weather and its profusion of flowers and new growth. Again from the [Wikipedia article on Easter](#) we learn that "Easter customs vary across the Christian world, and include sunrise services, midnight vigils, exclamations and exchanges of Paschal greetings, clipping the church (England), decoration and the communal breaking of Easter eggs (a symbol of the empty tomb). The Easter lily, a symbol of the resurrection in Western Christianity, traditionally decorates the chancel area of churches on this day and for the rest of Eastertide. Additional customs that have become associated with Easter and are observed by both Christians and some non-Christians include Easter parades, communal dancing (Eastern Europe), the Easter Bunny and egg hunting. There are also traditional

Easter foods that vary by region and culture."

Our family will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whatever your family celebrates, do enjoy the holiday.

NEAR-EAST CONFLICT

Every few years another try is made at negotiating a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. It is well intentioned, but doomed to frustration.

The story, and the reason for all the frustration, began some 4,000 years ago with Abraham and his wife Sarah. God promised Abraham that a son coming from his own body would be his heir [Genesis 15:1-6] and that God would give to Abraham the land from the Nile River (in present day Egypt) to the Euphrates River (in present day Iraq) for his possession [Genesis 15:18-21, Genesis 17:6-8, Genesis 35:9-15, and Joshua 1:1-5].

When they got old and no heir was born to them, Sarah told Abraham to provide an heir by her Egyptian servant Hagar, and he did [Genesis 16:1-4]. Abraham's firstborn son (when Abraham was age 86), by Hagar the Egyptian, was named Ishmael. He is the patriarch and source of the Arab race [Genesis 17:19-22 and 21:18]. Of Ishmael, God said "He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers" [Genesis 16:12 and Genesis 25:13-18].

Fourteen years later, Sarah bore Abraham the son that God had promised [Genesis 21:1-7]. Abraham's second born son (when Abraham was age 100), by his wife Sarah, was named Isaac. He is the patriarch and source of the Jewish race [Genesis 15:4, 17:19-22 and 22:17].

After Sarah died, Abraham took another wife Keturah who bore him more sons [Genesis 25:1-6]. Before he died (at age 175), Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac [Genesis 25:5].

The Qur'an refers extensively to Abraham (Ibrahim), Ishmael (Ismail), and Isaac (Ishaq) [Surah 2:136, 3:84 and more] but without any detail. The Qur'an also refers extensively to, and honors, the [Jewish Torah \(Tawrah, or Taurat\)](#), the five books of Moses (Musa) of which Genesis, referenced herein, is the first book [Surah 3:1-4, 5:44, 6:91 and more]. I have not yet found in the Qur'an any reference to the land now called Israel or to the city of Jerusalem.

Today, the descendants of the half-brothers Ishmael and Isaac, Arabs and Jews, both claim inheritance of Abraham's legacy. Both claim title to the city of Jerusalem. For historical time-lines of the city of Jerusalem, showing the many conflicts for ownership of this city, see [Jerusalem Timeline 1](#) (Jewish) and [Jerusalem Timeline 2](#) (Wikipedia).

As we often hear today, you really don't know someone until you've shared an inheritance with them! Given the history of this region over the centuries, it should come as no surprise that current efforts toward peace and harmony will be frustrating.

NOTE: Names and their spellings will vary with different traditions and translations into English.

TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK

Matthew 5:38-42: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.’ [Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21] But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

What does it mean to "turn the other cheek"? What does Jesus have to say about self defense when we are attacked verbally and physically? Below are numerous examples from the Gospel of Matthew illustrating how Jesus reacted in these situations.

Matthew 1:12: The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they returned home by another route.

Matthew 1:13: An angel warned Joseph to take Jesus and Mary and flee to Egypt. They fled at night.

Matthew 1:19-21: An angel in a dream told Joseph it was safe to return to Israel. Afraid to go to Judea, Joseph went to Galilee, to a town called Nazareth.

Matthew 4:1-11: Jesus was tempted by the Devil. Jesus answered the Devil by quoting scripture. The Devil left.

Matthew 5:5: “Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.”

Matthew 5:43-48: “You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. [Lev. 19:18] But I tell you: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven...' As used here the word 'love' is a verb of action. It is not a feeling. To love our enemy means to treat our enemy the same as we would treat a friend: to help them in their need, to wish them well and to give them a smile when we meet them. All of this in spite of the painful memory of how they did us wrong.

Matthew 10:14: “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.” In other words, do not object, do not retaliate, do not judge – just leave quietly.

Matthew 12:14-15: “But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place.”

Matthew 26:47-56: Jesus is betrayed. One of his companions cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus healed the ear [Luke 22:51].

Matthew 27:12: “When [Jesus] was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer.”

BOTTOM LINE

Other than answering with words and walking away, Jesus never took defensive action against His accusers and tormentors. He allowed them to do with Him as they chose.

God will on occasion warn you and me to take evasive action. He will not ask us to take defensive action. We are to accept what God gives to us as in "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me." [Matthew 24:9] This is consistent with "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." [Phillipians 4:19] Our **need** is not to live a long and happy life here on Earth, but to spend eternity with God. If we want to be like Jesus then we must accept persecution and death like He did. [Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 18 & 19]

As for vengeful or retaliatory action, the Bible is quite clear: "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." [Leviticus 19:18] and "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." [Romans 12:19 and Deuteronomy 32:35]

CONFESSION: Despite all of my best intentions I can not control my temper the way Jesus did! I've tried really hard. But then, Jesus was God in a man's body. Obviously I am not!

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Many books have been written about the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses up on Mount Sinai, as recorded in Exodus chapter 20 verses 1 to 17 and in Deuteronomy chapter 5 verses 4-21. These are not suggestions. They are commandments given to us by our creator and, if seriously followed, will enhance our success in this life, and show God how much we value His guidance and love.

1. "You shall have no other gods before me."
2. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below..."

Gods take many forms in present day life experiences. Money, fame and power are just three things worshiped by many today in the place of our creator God.

3. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God." I once had an atheist friend who was an expert at using the name of God in vain. I once said to his wife, "For a man who does not believe in God he sure talks about Him a lot!" The popular expression "OMG" (Oh My God) is another example of using God's name frivolously.
4. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." This is one of the more widely broken (not kept)

commandments, even by many who otherwise love God and try seriously to keep these commandments. The Sabbath day, every seventh day, is still part of our calendar thousands of years after this commandment was given. Whether Friday, Saturday or Sunday it is a much needed day of rest and a time to focus our attention on God.

5. “Honor your father and your mother...” In these modern times there are too many children who do not even know who their mothers or fathers are. In that case I suggest the children honor the people who raise them, who feed them, who nurture them and who have their backs. Sad to say, some children are forced to look to various gangs for that support when their biological parents are too selfish to care for the children they made and are responsible for.

6. “You shall not murder.” We’ve all had the thought that the world would be a better place if only so-and-so did not exist. But God does not give us permission to end the life of someone else just because their life is inconvenient to us. Abortion is only one example of this.

7. “You shall not commit adultery.” God created all of us, male and female. God created sex so we can pair up with a partner for life and make children and a family. Adultery is having sexual intercourse with someone other than our married wife or husband and erodes the trust that must exist between husband and wife to function as God intended.

8. “You shall not steal.” God recognizes the ownership of property as the reward of our hard labor and intelligent planning. Stealing is taking something away from the person who earned it and without their permission. Whether a single paper clip or a lifetime of earned money it is still wrong.

9. “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” Each of us has a reputation – what other people know about us and tell each other about us. Whether in a courtroom trial or around the kitchen table, some people who know the truth about us will lie and tell a different story thinking it will somehow advance their own agenda. The lives of good honest people have been ruined this way.

10. “You shall not covet your neighbor's house... or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” The uncommon word “covet” does not mean to admire or value something our neighbor owns or has. That word “covet” means to scheme and plan how to steal it from our neighbor and own it ourself.

IS PEACE OF MIND RELEVANT?

Those of us who live in the United States in this 21st century should be thankful to someone. We have a high standard of living, excellent medical care, numerous education opportunities and a Constitution that guarantees each of us freedom to worship how and what we please and the freedom to speak our mind without worry of repression or arrest for doing so. So why then do we have so many broken homes, addicts on the streets, suicides increasing in all walks of life and other signs of extreme worry

and distress? Could it be that the decades-long effort to erase God from our schools and culture have left our children without a moral compass or techniques for coping with the problems of normal living?

What has been removed from our children's education is teaching such as we find in the Bible, book of Proverbs, chapter 1, verses 1 – 7 and many more like it.

“The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 for gaining wisdom and instruction;

for understanding words of insight;

3 for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,

doing what is right and just and fair;

4 for giving prudence to those who are simple,

knowledge and discretion to the young—

5 let the wise listen and add to their learning,

and let the discerning get guidance—

6 for understanding proverbs and parables,

the sayings and riddles of the wise.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,

but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

The whole book of Proverbs is like that. And the whole Bible adds even more examples of what works and what does not work in living this life. Talk about relevant!

FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

In 20th century America no one worried about their freedom to worship any of several gods in various churches, cathedrals, mosques and other buildings used for that purpose. After all we have the first amendment of our Constitution which says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” Doesn't everyone enjoy that? No, they do not and a few examples will quickly show how relevant the Bible is about that.

1. In the Bible, book of Daniel, chapter three we read the story of how King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made an image of Gold 90 feet high and commanded everyone to worship that golden statue. Anyone who did not bow down and worship the statue was condemned to death.
2. Many of us are aware that during the time of the Roman Empire the Emperor was worshiped as a god and citizens were required to adhere to that law. Christianity was illegal there until the fourth century when the Emperor Constantine became a Christian. See the example in the Bible, book of Acts chapter 16, verses 16 – 40.
3. Many of us are aware that worship of anyone or anything other than the state government is not allowed in Communist countries such as Russia, China, North Korea and Cuba.

4. In 21st century America during the Covid-19 Pandemic several politicians took it upon themselves to ignore our Constitution. In July 2020 California's Governor Newsom ordered churches closed along with some, but not all, commercial establishments. Also in July 2020, "Places of worship must, therefore, discontinue singing and chanting activities and limit indoor attendance to 25 percent of building capacity or a maximum of 100 attendees, whichever is lower," new guidelines read as state health officials recommend churches have members sing online from their homes.

WHY THIS STUDY MATTERS

Why does this study about the Bible matter? The theme of the Bible is to remind us of how much God loves us humans, created in His own image.

This study matters because if the Bible cannot be believed - if it is only myth and superstition – then the Bible cannot be trusted as a source of truth. But, if it speaks with relevance in our time then maybe the Bible itself is not just a collection of ancient stories but an accurate and valuable treasury of wisdom and truth.

IF this universe of ours is the result of random chance some 13 Billion years ago, then we humans have only ourselves to look to for values, for morals and whatever future we can arrange for ourselves.

BUT, if we humans are the deliberate creation of a loving God who cares enough about us to know the number of hairs on our heads [Matthew 10:30, Luke 12:7] and has specific plans for our future [Psalm 139, Jeremiah 29:11, 1 Peter 5:7] and has taught us what really matters and how to succeed in living our lives [Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:4-21, Matthew chapters 5-7] then we can know that our lives have real value and that we are not helpless and alone.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [John 3:16]

God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ, is my Lord and Savior. That makes me a "Christian" by the original definition [Acts 11:26]. I am a sinner saved by grace [Ephesians 2:8-9]. Jesus would love to be your Lord and Savior also. It's easy. Just ask Him to forgive your sins (disobedience toward God) and come into your life and be your Lord and Master. He will. [John 3:16, Romans 3:22-24, 1 John 1:9] Then you and Jesus can have a one-on-one personal relationship. Best thing I ever did.